

REFLECTION OF GROWTH POLES THEORY IN TURKEY AS SUPPORTING PROGRAM FOR ATTRACTION CENTRES

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ABSTRACT: Once popular and now effective, the theory of Growth Poles found places in many countries' regional development agenda to some extents. Turkey is among the countries, which tried to give emphasis on the Theory since its adoption by the world, in especially its development plans and studies preparing ground for the Theory. However, after a long preparation process, Turkey decided to support financially the Theory by determining 12 city centres as Attraction Centres (AC) in less developed regions in a program i.e. Supporting Program for Attraction Centres (SPAC). Present study aims to give brief information about the theory of GP, mention about its reflection on Turkey as AC and summarize the results of the application of AC approach by looking inside a financial support program for ACs, SPAC.

Keywords: supporting attraction centres program, Turkey, development agencies

1. INTRODUCTION

Turkey has never been isolated in its history from the socioeconomic developments in the rest of the world, especially those happening in the West. After the foundation of modern Turkish Republic, very dense and challenging efforts started to develop all parts of the country socioeconomically. In this respect, Turkey searched, adjusted and adopted some policies which were then updated and not far from the world's agenda. Therefore, planned socioeconomic development adventure of the Country is not a new phenomenon because the history of such attempts may go back to the last period of Ottoman Empire (Tekeli 2009). In the first years of modern Republic period, a central and governmental decision making (like İzmir Economy Congress), planning and investing efforts were adopted and performed in convenience with the understanding of that period (Akyıldız and Eroğlu 2004). Until 1960, which is accepted to be the starting point of planned development period because Turkish State Planning Organisation (SPO) was established in that year, such centralism continued and mainly governmental investment in especially industry sector derived the main production activities of the Country even though some exceptions were also witnessed such as external aids like Marshall (Kepenek and Yenitürk 1994).

In planned period, the 1st National Five – Year Development Plan began to be implemented in 1963 and Turkey followed the economic agenda of the world more closely than ever. In that time, a relatively new development approach, “Growth Poles”, was debated and applied in part in scientific and administrative sides. The experience of creating “Growth Poles” started in the 1950s with Perroux (1950; 1955; 1961) and set a frame for development programs in the entire world after especially World War II (Friedmann and Weaver 1979; Richardson 1981; Barquero 1991).

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The theory of “Growth Poles” (GP) developed in time by being adjusted to different approaches and physical and spatial forms according to the regions and countries willing to apply such a theory (Christofakis and Papadaskalopoulos 2011; Gantsho 2008). Almost every country has a source of information on regional development considering the Theory, which, for example, in turn can be associated with “Attraction Centres” (AC). To some extent, the growth pole theory set the discussion for the regional planning further on, which developed a very strong influence in the world even until today by looking at economies as integrated systems. Good literature supports on theory and applications especially in countries can be found among the works belonging to the World Bank, UNCRD and OECD, which may serve as references showing how the ACs were derived from the Theory’s itself.

The theory of GP considers the view that limited national sources cannot be equally distributed to whole country and foresees the concentration of investments in selected centres. In such an approach, with the investments, economic mobility will start and positive exogeneity resulting from scale and accumulation economies can sustain growth and affect the surrounding close proximity of the poles created positively (KB 2015).

As aforementioned, during the first years of Planned Period in Turkey from 1960s, main efforts were spent on the expansion of economic activities and capital through mostly governmental incentives by avoiding their accumulation at only certain points or centres (like Istanbul) and aiming to develop sub-centres to create growth points in especially Anatolia (Özgür, 2010), which is based strictly on the adoption of the GP theory. However; such an approach mainly ignored the use of local potentials for regional development. With the globalization process, local and regional values and actors gained importance and regional development entered the agenda. National and international experiences gained from regional and local development stories showed the obligation of replacing the central development understanding with local and regional one in Turkey as it was in the world.

Reflection of this understanding in Turkey as regional development policy and application is gradation of settlements by Turkish State Planning Organization in 1982 and then the determination of 16 functional regions to serve as a growth pole. However, such an approach could not be successful since no financial source was then left and no policy was developed for these regions (KB 2015). Policy of creating GPs in less developed regions was on the agenda in various planning periods in Turkey in order to reduce socioeconomic development differences between the regions. In 9th Development Plan (2007-2013) of Turkey where EU adaptation policies took overwhelmingly place and a regional development understanding based on competitiveness was adopted, growth centres tried to be put into practice through a national financial support program called Supporting Program for Attraction Centres (SPAC; Gelici, 2014).

Present study aims to give brief information about the theory of GP, mention about its reflection on Turkey as AC and summarize the results of the application of AC approach by looking inside a financial support program for ACs, SPAC.

2. TURKISH SUPPORTING PROGRAM FOR ATTRACTION CENTRES (SPAC)

SPAC is accepted to be a reflection of GP theory in Turkey. I mainly results from a developed and raised project preparation and management capacity together with earlier nationwide studies like those by Turkish State Planning Organization (today’s Ministry of Development) such as gradation of settlements and determination of 16 functional regions, which serve as a base for this program. In 9th DP, mentioned above, a priority includes the activation of regional development policy at central government level and mentions about the determination of ACs “with high potentials for growing, application of public investments, supplying services, spatial prioritization and focusing in especially less developed regions and improvement of physical and social infrastructures and accessibility of these centres (KB 2015).

It is mentioned in also the 10th DP (2014-2018) that migration of human population in Turkey has in recent years been from less developed regions to developed ones (especially Istanbul) rather than intraregional movements since at regional level (NUTS I) there are no developed ACs in East and West Blacksea and Middle-east and Northeast Anatolia Regions. In order to cope with such a condition, beginning from 2008, some more developed cities in middle and east of Turkey (e.g. Erzurum, Sivas and Diyarbakır) challenged to be an AC through a financial support program (KB 2013). Turkish National Strategy for Regional Development, an upper scale strategic document, mentions about ACs as “growth focuses” which are planned to be developed in the less developed eastern part of the country serving as an attractive centre for production and service sector, accelerating socioeconomic development and enabling well balanced development (KB 2014). It is foreseen by supporting city centres with development potentials in the scope of SPAC that development differences will appear in the region where such ACs are located. Basic principle of SPAC is to support predetermined strategic projects in order to benefit effectively from limited financial source.

1.1. General process of SPAC

SPAC was designed based on Turkey’s project preparation and management experience it gained during EU process including the preparation of preliminary strategy document, stakeholder analysis, preparation of program document and decision of Upper Planning Court (KB 2015). Long-term objective of SPAC is to contribute to decreasing the differences in socioeconomic development between nationwide regions by extending ACs to their surrounding areas. Specific objective of the program is to accelerate socioeconomic development in selected city centres in relatively less developed regions and prevent migration to out-regions by expanding development to surrounding areas of ACs. SPAC is expected to serve for following priorities:

- To increase the contribution of regions to national economy by using their potentials and locomotive sectors,
- To improve physical and social infrastructure and accessibility of ACs,
- To empower coordination between actors in ACs.

Responsible Turkish public institution for the implementation and monitoring and evaluation of SPAC is Ministry of Development. ACs are accepted to be city centres to clearly define spatial focusing by considering their socio-economic development order (must be among the first 60 city centres), population (between 250.000 and 1.000.000), employment rate of service sector (at least 53%), sheltering an airport and university and representing the determined geographical regions (East, Southeast, Middle Anatolia and Blacksea Regions of Turkey). According to deep analysis conducted by considering the aforementioned criteria city centres of Malatya, Elazığ, Erzurum, Van, Gaziantep, Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Samsun, Trabzon, Konya, Kayseri and Sivas (totally 12 cities) were determined to be attraction centres (KB 2015; Figure 1).

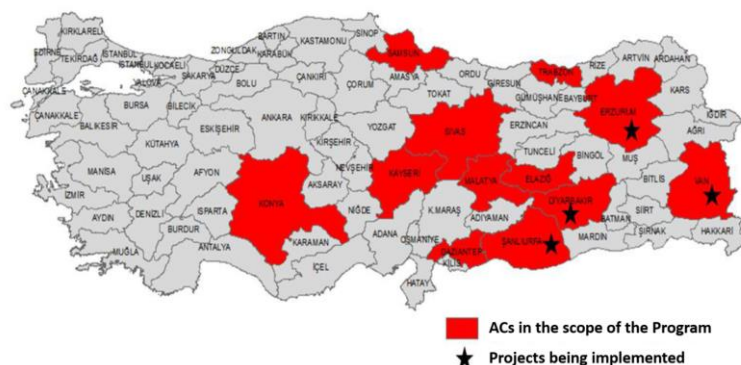


Figure 1. Attraction centres (Gelici, 2014)

2. PROJECTS PREPARED AND APPLIED IN THE SCOPE OF SPAC

After the determination of 12 cities to be ACs in 2007 public investment program, pilot project began to be implemented in Diyarbakır in 2008-2010 period by transferring 51 Million Turkish Liras (about 17 million Euros). In Diyarbakır, 15 strategic projects were completed between 2008 and 2010 for 27 months.

In addition, SPAC was also applied beginning in 2011 in Erzurum, Şanlıurfa and Van city centres; in 2013 in Gaziantep and in 2015 in Elazığ, Sivas and Malatya by transferring 308 million TL (103 million Euros) to program from central budget in a period between 2011 and 2014 and in 2015 90 million TL (30 million Euros) was also transferred to the program.

In SPAC, so far 20 projects have been implemented in 4 city centres (Table 1). Monitoring and evaluation process of these projects have been conducted by regional development agencies (RDAS) since 2011 at local level. These RDAs are Karacadağ, East Anatolia, Northeast Anatolia and Silkroad Development Agencies. Project applicants are responsible for the implementation of the projects.

Table 1: SPAC projects being implemented

AC	Number of Projects	Budget TL
ERZURUM	4	161.916.615,13
DİYARBAKIR	9	26.065.595,11
ŞANLIURFA	4	50.174.165,55
VAN	3	78.973.184,00
Total	20	317.129.559,79

When considered the contents of the projects being applied in 4 ACs, it can be stated that they are mainly related to tourism sector where physical infrastructure tried to be completed for culture, congress and winter tourism to use their potentials.

Projects decided to be supported financially in Erzurum are wholly related to the development of tourism i.e. Culture Road being implemented by Erzurum Grand Municipality; Rehabilitation and Renovation of Üç Kümbetler (Three Tombs) and its surroundings being implemented by Erzurum Yakutiye Sub-municipality; High Altitude Sportive Camping being implemented by Erzurum Youth and Sports Administration and Loan Support Program for Tourism implemented by KOSGEB (SMEs Support Institutions).

Projects decided to be supported financially in Diyarbakır are also related in great majority to tourism. These are Restoration of Minaret of Şeyh Mutahhar Mosque implemented by Governorate of Diyarbakır; Projecting Diyarbakır's Cultural Heritage by Diyarbakır Culture and Tourism Administration; Using Diyarbakır Houses in tourism by Diyarbakır Culture and Tourism Administration; Renovation project of Ulu Cami and surrounding of Hanlar by Diyarbakır Culture and Tourism Administration; Using Diyarbakır's city wall in tourism by Diyarbakır Culture and Tourism Administration; Promotion of Diyarbakır's cultural heritage by Governorate of Diyarbakır; Kulp Silk production Centre Kulp by Chamber of agriculture; Restoration of Diyarbakır's inner castle walls by Governorate of Diyarbakır and Projecting Diyarbakır Şehzadeler House by Governorate of Diyarbakır.

In Şanlıurfa, projects are also related wholly to tourism sector. These projects are Using Castle skirts (Kale Eteği) in tourism implemented by Special Provincial Administration of Şanlıurfa; Street Facet Improvement and culture island by Special Provincial Administration of Şanlıurfa; Promotion of Şanlıurfa's Cultural Heritage by Governorate of Şanlıurfa; Projecting GAP Valley project drawing by Special Provincial Administration of Şanlıurfa.

In Van, two of three projects are again related to tourism and one is different. These projects are Textile city Project being implemented by Special Provincial Administration of Van; Tuşba Fair and Congress Centre by Special Provincial Administration of Van and Urartu Museum by Special Provincial Administration of Van.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Detractors of the GP theory as Gilbert (1974; 1976; 1977) and Moseley (1973; 1974) expressed their concerns and warnings about possible consequences of an isolated approach to the Growth Pole Theory, which were proven to be right later on, followed by many governments that abandoned the trend on this theory (Breathnach, 1982; Conroy, 1973).

In this respect, Turkish SPAC experience based on the Theory seems not to be focused on its aims to stimulate and accelerate socioeconomic development in less developed regions by supporting strategic projects.

There are some situations that caused the program to deviate from its original objectives such as the sector related to the projects decided on by local stakeholders. Concerns of SPAC towards the development of strategic and the most benefitting projects through a local participation seem not be removed when the types and applications of the projects are evaluated since mainly the political actors, municipalities and governorates are effective on the selection of the projects. They usually do not consider the management and operational models of the project outputs of the projects which are in tourism sector sheltering high risks.

Because the amount of financial support transferred from central budget to the Program since 2008 in 5 city centres (Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Erzurum, Van and Gaziantep) is about 350 million TL (117 million Euros), this amount should have been used to move other financial sources like those from private sector. However, decision makers from both local and central levels could not decide on other possible investment types than public investment, such as public – private partnerships (PPP) in spite of a huge amount of public finance transferred to the ACs. In this respect, some contributions, at least, half of the public money might have been provided from local or out national private sector institutions. So there may be an ownership towards the projects to be implemented. In today's conditions, in the scope of the projects being implemented in mostly city centres covering large rates of private properties, more than two third of the financial support was spent on expropriation price.

As a conclusion, SPAC experience of Turkey based on GP theory may be a good preference and whistle a new breath to the regional development challenges in the Country, but it may be started and supported financially earlier and stronger than today. Central development policies should incessantly adopt and support the Theory and Program if it is believed that such a local development approach will be beneficial. Sectors, owners, stakeholders and decision makers of the SPAC projects desired to be strategic and contributors should be reconsidered and regional development agencies should be included in the process not as a monitoring and evaluation authority but also project developer since they are among the local actors having, at the present situation, largest capacity and accumulation for potentials of their regions and project preparation and management.

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